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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 003045

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [IZ](#) [IR](#) [SY](#)
SUBJECT: DIPLOMATIC UPDATE: MOMENTUM ON ARAB AMBASSADORS,
REJECTION OF IRANIAN DIPLOMATS

REF: A. BAGHDAD 2366
[1](#)B. BAGHDAD 2203
[1](#)C. BAGHDAD 1838

Classified By: By Political Minister Counselor Robert S. Ford. Reasons
1.4(b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: According to a senior MFA official, Syria's appointment of an ambassador to Iraq might set the stage to enable the two countries to engage on security and other issues. The official is hopeful that the Syrian ambassador-designate's intelligence background will advance Neighbors Process security efforts. He said the MFA expects that ambassadors from Bahrain, the Arab League, and possibly Kuwait will arrive after Ramadan. Three Jordanian diplomats have arrived and the Jordanian ambassador is expected to join them soon after renovations to their embassy site are completed. However, Prime Minister's Office inaction continues to stall MFA attempts to post ambassadors to key Arab countries. The senior MFA official noted that both the GOI and KRG have recently refused to approve an Iranian request for accreditation of several diplomats the GOI knows to be Revolutionary Guard members. End summary.

New Chapter in Iraqi-Syrian Relations

[1](#)2. (C) Deputy Foreign Minister Labeed Abbawi told Pol-Mil Counselor September 18 that Syria's appointment of Nawaf al-Fares as ambassador to Iraq may set the stage for a more productive bilateral relationship, particularly on security issues. Noting that the future ambassador was a high-ranking member of the Ba'ath party who had come up through the ranks of the Ministry of Interior to hold key security positions (most recently as governor of strategically critical Quneitra on the Golan Heights), Abbawi described al-Fares' appointment as a very deliberate selection.

[1](#)3. (C) Continuing, Abbawi said the arrival of a Syrian ambassador to Iraq --relations had been frozen at the charge level for over 24 years -- may allow the two countries to directly engage on security and all aspects in a much more meaningful way. Abbawi said he hoped to use al-Fares' intelligence experience and connections to advance Neighbors Process security efforts. He noted that al-Fares comes from the town of Albou-Kamal in southeastern Syria near the Iraqi border and thus has a regional perspective that will be useful on border security issues. Abbawi said that he expected al-Fares to arrive relatively soon and that the GOI was in the process of approving its own envoy to Damascus.

[1](#)4. (C) Pol-Mil Counselor asked whether the GOI expected other positive gestures or tangible results following the appointment of a Syrian ambassador or whether he thought the Syrian would come to Baghdad absent the GOI sending an Ambassador to Damascus. Abbawi responded that while Syria has not fulfilled its border security commitments, there has been some positive movement on the Iraq-Syria oil pipeline and that having a Syrian ambassador in Baghdad may facilitate

further progress on this and other economic issues. (Note: Abbawi was referring to an Iraq-Syria crude oil pipeline which has been out-of-service since before 2003. Both countries will need to collaborate on extensive repairs to bring it back into operation. End note.) Abbawi did not know if the SARG would send the Ambassador before Iraq reciprocated.

Continuing Momentum on Arab Ambassadors

15. (C) Abbawi said the Jordanian Ambassador will be posted to Baghdad as soon as renovations are completed at the Jordanian mission in the Diplomatic Zone. (Note: Three Jordanian diplomats and an engineer arrived on September 14 and are working out of the al-Rashid Hotel. End Note.) He said he expected the Bahraini and Arab League ambassadors to arrive after Eid al-Fitr (at the beginning of October). They will be joined by UAE Ambassador Al-Shihi, who arrived on September 4, but returned to the UAE for Ramadan. Abbawi predicted that Egypt would soon appoint an ambassador, and was hopeful that Kuwait's ambassador-designate would accompany Prime Minister Sheikh Nasser during his planned visit to Baghdad shortly after Ramadan.

16. (C) Abbawi lamented the vacuum in the MFA that has been caused by Prime Minister Office's inaction on a list of over 40 ambassadorial nominees. He said the Prime Minister's refusal to approve the list due to political horse trading over party representation among the nominees has left Iraq without ambassadorial representation in both Arab

BAGHDAD 00003045 002 OF 002

(particularly Cairo and the Gulf countries) and Western countries (UK, Italy, Switzerland). Foreign Minister Zebari several months ago asked the Prime Minister to approve six of the 40 nominees who are career ambassadors slated to be posted to fill critical vacancies in Arab countries (reftels). Abbawi said there had been a long meeting the previous week to try to break the logjam, but the Prime Minister's Office did not budge. He said there would be a follow-up meeting soon.

Iranian Infiltration

17. (C) Pol-mil Counselor asked about the status of Iranian efforts to get the GOI to accept accreditation of Iranian diplomats in Iraq that were not real diplomats. Abbawi noted the MFA would continue to clear with the Embassy any names the Iranians provided. He said Iran had recently requested accreditation for a list of putatively diplomatic personnel to be assigned to Iranian consular posts, including Erbil, but that neither the GOI or the KRG had approved the list or were likely to do so because the diplomats are in fact Revolutionary Guard members and the names had been previously submitted. Abbawi wryly noted that when Iran's Ambassador to Baghdad inquired about the delay, he subtly suggested that Tehran submit a different set of names.

Comment

18. (C) The Prime Minister Office's inaction on the MFA's ambassadorial nomination list, particularly on the six career ambassadors slated to be posted to Arab countries, has been a point of contention between Foreign Minister Zebari and Prime Minister Maliki for several months. We regularly press the Iraqis to resolve this and get on with naming - and posting ambassadors to these key countries, but have had no indication that a resolution is near at hand. Whether the protocol-conscious Syrians would be willing to post their new ambassador without the reciprocal posting of an Iraqi

ambassador to Damascus is an open question.
CROCKER